



Ready for deployment to a coastal fishing site, concrete spheres known as reef balls attract fish by providing holes of hideouts on an otherwise featureless sea floor.

### FISH ATTRACTORS TESTED OFF S.C. COAST

Experimental concrete fish attractors called reef balls have been sunk off South Carolina's coast as part of a nationwide project to evaluate the effectiveness of the units.

Reef balls are hollow concrete structures three to six feet in diameter that are molded around a reusable, inflated bladder. This fall, about 120 reef balls of three different sizes were sunk on the Kiawah Reef southeast of Charleston.

"The high-profile design of the reef balls and the many access holes in each unit make these ideal fish attractors," said Mel Bell, manager of the state DNR's artificial reef program.

Bell said Reef Ball Development Group of

Doraville, Georgia, furnished the DNR free use of 12 molds to produce the reef balls. In return, the agency will conduct a multi-year study to assess the effectiveness of the modules.

"The company provided us with the molds for sixty days, so our only cost was the concrete and transportation to the reef," Bell said. Revenue from the sale of saltwater fishing stamps was used to build and deploy the units.

"We plan to monitor the reef balls over a period of years to see how well they attract fish and other marine life," Bell said.

South Carolina is the second state to participate in the experiment. More than 300 reef balls were recently added to artificial reefs off the Florida coast.